

However, one year later we see a deteriorating Haiti. One not imagined in our collective plans to "Build Back Better," one year ago. Instead, over one million displaced people still live in tent camps while conditions in the country continue to deteriorate. It is apparent that substantive reconstruction has barely begun and significant progress will continue to face obstacles in the near future. As witnessed in the recent demonstrations following the Haitian general elections, civil strife and unrest continue to pervade the populace at large. With the growing cholera epidemic, the situation in Haiti is especially dangerous and volatile.

Mr. Speaker, as the Representative of the second largest Haitian immigrant population in the country, I am deeply concerned about the conditions on the ground. Although some progress has been made, it appears as though conditions are deteriorating at a faster rate. As USAID and other international organizations scramble to resolve the housing/rubble crisis, security is rapidly decreasing within the IDP camps. Gender Based Violence (GBV) is further threatening the physical, mental and emotional capacity of women and girls. I commend USAID and the NGO community for taking steps to address this, but more is needed to end this phenomenon.

It is of the utmost importance for all parties engaged in this humanitarian response and reconstruction efforts to significantly improve their outreach to women and girls. Near term and longer term assistance programs will only be effective if women and girls are fully engaged as equal partners in program assessment, design, and implementation. There is a vibrant network of women's organizations in Haiti. Their involvement is critical to the successful reconstruction of Haiti and to the development of a society that offers equal protection and opportunity to all its citizens.

Before I conclude, I would like to also recognize Ms. Corrine Jocelyn, Executive Director of Diaspora Community Services for her remarkable work in organizing the March for Change that took place today in recognition of the one year anniversary of the earthquake. She was joined by many other Haitian organizations and prominent community leaders calling the Haitian Diaspora and their allies to actions. I fully support this endeavor and encourage the entire Haitian Diaspora to become more involved in advocating and educating our Nation on Haitian heritage and the issues that plague the island nation.

Lastly, I would like to recognize Bells for Haiti initiative that took place today in Minnesota. At the time the earthquake took place, bells will ring from churches, schools and organizations for 35 seconds to commemorate the event. I commend the organizers, Konbit—MN/Haiti and the participants for such a beautiful tribute.

As we continue to support our brothers and sisters in Haiti, let us never forget Let us never forget that as we unite with the people of Haiti, Haitian-Americans and the Haitian Diaspora that we are forever guided by the words etched indelibly on the Haitian flag, 'L'Union fait la force' (Loon yon feh la force) . . . through unity, there is strength!

RECOGNIZING MAJOR MARK O'NEILL, UNITED STATES ARMY, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE ARMY'S HOUSE LIAISON OFFICE

HON. GEOFF DAVIS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 18, 2011

Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize and pay tribute to Major Mark O'Neill, United States Army, on the occasion of his departure from the Army's House Liaison Office and his new assignment as a student at the Army's Command and General Staff College. My staff and I have had the great pleasure of working with Mark over the past year he has served with the Congress. It has been an honor to work with this combat veteran and citizen-soldier.

Major O'Neill has had a varied and distinguished military career. Upon graduation from Villanova University in May of 1998, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Army. After completing the Infantry Officer Basic Course and Ranger School at Ft. Benning, Georgia, he was assigned to the elite 82nd Airborne Division as an airborne infantry platoon leader. In March of 2000, he led his thirty-nine-man platoon in a joint exercise in Oman with the Omani army. During his time with the 82nd, Mark, a paratrooper to the core, participated in fifteen airborne operations.

In December of 2000, he transferred to the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) where he served as a platoon leader and regimental personnel officer. With the Old Guard, then First Lieutenant O'Neill conducted dozens of military funerals and state ceremonies. The same dedication with which he accorded respect to grieving families and friends during funerals at Arlington National Cemetery was in evidence on September 11, 2001, when Mark led his platoon in the initial response to the attack on the Pentagon.

Major O'Neill left active duty in May of 2003, joining the Cintas Corporation as a Service/Sales Manager, but in February of 2006 he was recalled from the Ready Reserve to serve as an embedded trainer with the fledgling Afghan National Army. As an advisor to an Afghan National Army (ANA) infantry company, Mark trained the company leadership on both tactical and logistical tasks and accompanied them on over twenty combat patrols. On more than one occasion, he experienced combat firsthand. He was cited for bravery in October of 2006 for organizing the defense of his ANA company and repelling a Taliban ambush.

In June of 2007, Mark joined the Army National Guard and was assigned to the National Guard Bureau's Directorate of Domestic Operations. From February 2010 to present, he served as the National Guard's legislative liaison with the Department of the Army's House Liaison Division. During his assignment to the Army House Liaison Office, Major O'Neill developed outstanding rapport with Members of Congress and their staffs—both personal and committee. Whether escorting congressional delegations to visit soldiers and families at Army installations, soldiers in the theater of operations or Wounded Warriors at Walter Reed, Mark has been a strong advocate for soldiers and a superb representative of Army values.

I ask that my colleagues please join me in recognizing the outstanding accomplishments of Major Mark O'Neill in serving the United States Army and the Nation.

EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES TO THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA FOR THE LOSS OF LIFE AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY DUE TO THE WORST FLOODING IN HALF A CENTURY

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 18, 2011

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my condolences for the loss of life and destruction of property that is occurring in Australia's northern state of Queensland, as a consequence of the worst floods in half a century. The flood, which has affected three-quarters of Queensland, has killed 20 residents and resulted in thousands of people being evacuated from their homes and businesses.

The steady rain that fell for days before Christmas caused rivers to swell and inundated 22 cities and towns. The Australian National Climate Centre has predicted that the region is highly likely to receive even more than average rainfall from now until the end of March, when the full impact of a strong La Nina cycle will be felt. Estimates of the number of Queenslanders affected go as high as 200,000. States of natural disaster have been declared in 41 of Queensland's 73 municipalities and more than 11,000 people have been evacuated. In addition, the floods have cut off food supplies to communities in the north including Townsville, Cairns and many indigenous communities.

Economists predict that the floods will have an impact on the national GDP of between 0.25 percent and 0.5 percent, or \$3 billion to \$6 billion, with the mining and agricultural industries affected the most. Half of the state's agricultural crops have been destroyed, coal deliveries have been halted, and mines shut. The international economy will likely feel this economic burden because Queensland supplies half of the world's cooking coal for steel manufacturing, which accounts for about two-thirds of the global trade. The Premier of Queensland and Australia's Prime Minister have announced additional disaster relief assistance to help small businesses and primary producers that have been impacted.

Encouragingly, the size of the tragedy has been matched by the size and speed of the response, but the long-term impact is yet to be determined. It will be a long wait before the massive amount of water recedes and the recovery process starts, involving the resurfacing of roads, reconnecting of power and repairing of infrastructure—all requiring an unparalleled rebuilding effort. I extend my sincere appreciation to the emergency service personnel, army and air force crews, volunteers, and Australia's federal and Queensland governments for their well coordinated response to this disaster. The loss suffered would have been far greater without the skill, dedication, compassion, and sacrifice of these emergency responders.

Mr. Speaker, the flood in northern Australia is a major natural disaster and has caused